



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Come When Called

Having your puppy or dog come to you when you call them is a vital aspect of training, particularly for safety reasons. Not only that, but you may be able to give your dog more freedom when you are out and about, and be confident that they will return to you when you call them. Building a reliable come when called starts with a good bond between you and your puppy or dog. Refer to our TIPS at the end of this sheet for further guidance.

Like all training, it is best to start off with your dog or puppy under minimal distraction and set them up for success. Try with your puppy or dog on a lead in the house for example. When you have a good success rate with this, try on lead in the back garden, then the front garden, then the front footpath etc. Be patient with each step to build a solid recall.



Step 1

With your puppy or dog on a loose lead show that you have a treat in your hand. Slowly move backwards, still showing the treat and say your puppy's name followed by 'Come'. Be enthusiastic.

Step 2

Your puppy or dog will more than likely follow you, after you have moved back two or three steps lure them into the 'Sit' position and touch their collar.

It is important that you do not ask your puppy or dog to 'Sit', instead lure them into the 'sit' position. The aim is to teach your puppy or dog that the come when called exercise means "come to me and sit in front of me please!"

The collar touch/hold

This teaches your dog or puppy to like having their collar touched. This is important if you need to put your puppy or dog on a lead or hold onto their collar for safety reasons. Make sure you give the treat at the same time you touch their collar. This builds the correct association.

Step 3

Immediately reward your puppy with a treat and lots of praise!



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Troubleshooting

Q: My dog won't follow me!

A: Try using extra yummy treats! Anything that is soft and smelly such as roast chicken or beef. Save the most rewarding treats for exercises your dogs finds difficult.

Q: My dog prefers toys and games over food. Are these OK to use?

A: Yes! Try using squeaky toys and tug toys to get your dogs attention. Use these toys to lure your dog to you into a sit, and then let them play!

Q: My puppy won't come back to me when we go to the park!

A: Try taking a few steps back in the training and build a strong come when called at home first under lower distraction. Then try using a long line in the park. This will give your puppy some freedom, but it will still be under the safety of a lead. Make sure you have extra yummy treats at the park!

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TIPS

Dogs learn by association, so remember to never call your puppy or dog and do something they don't like (e.g. give them a tablet). Also, never call your puppy or dog and get angry with them. The next time you call them, they may think twice about coming to you!

Always praise your puppy or dog when they come to you even if you haven't called them 😊

Remember that your puppy or dog may ask "what's in it for me?" when you ask them to come to you. Make sure you are more exciting than what your dog is doing. This is called "Being Ronald Macdonald" to your dogs!